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THE NATIONAL CRISIS.

A LETTER

TO THE

HON. MILTON S. LATHAM,

SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA, IN WASHINGTON.

BY ANGLÓ-CALIFORNIAN.

FROM THE SAN FRANCISCO BULLETIN, Feb. 4th, 1861.

SAN FRANCISCO:
TOWNE & BACON, PRINTERS, EXCELSIOR OFFICE,
No. 603 Clay Street, corner of Sansome.
1861.



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THE NATIONAL CRISIS.

To the Hon. Milton S. Latham, Senator for California—
Washington :

DEAR SIR:—Sometimes an interested spectator sees more of a battle than the actual combatants. In the struggle which threatens to sever a powerful and hitherto compact confederacy of Sovereign States on this continent, an observer may perceive elements for hope in the future, even should the political difference of the present culminate in disunion.

I.

Some years ago, while attempting a criticism of De Toqueville's *Democracy in America*, I was necessarily led to the investigation of the political economy of the United States, and arrived at conclusions which seemed to have escaped that distinguished writer. It appeared to me that certain elements existed in the confederacy, which sooner or later would produce disunion. It is threatened earlier than I supposed it would take place, and the movement to effect it comes from a quarter opposite to that which (looking at the matter from a foreigner's point of view) I thought the movement would first spring. I anticipated that on the occurrence of a rupture of the American Confederacy, the demand for disunion would come from the North, and not from the South.

At the same time it did *not* seem, after placing the subject in every light which occurred to me, that even disunion, if it could be accom-

plished without civil war, would work material injury to either division, as to their external interest; while it offered to both a prospect of greatly increased internal cohesion and solidification, within themselves.

In times of national upheaval, calm words, (the mere expression of reason) from their very dispassionateness, sound tamely; yet, if ever in the history of a people there are times when its leaders should rise above contending factions and seek the higher ranges of thought, where, freed from the fogs of the strife below, they can take broad and clear views, and can look back over the great plains of history, crowded with the panorama of human life for centuries, whence come the voices of experience, telling how nations have done in the past, from which is gained the knowledge of what nations should do in the future, it is when popular excitement runs wildly amongst the masses of men around them, with whom any frenzy is contagious, cumulative by repetition, and destructive of the ordinary common sense of the national mind.

Though not technically a citizen, yet having lived for more than half a generation in the Union, with all my interests bound up in the welfare and progress of its people, I trust an expression of my views, so far as they may recall the analogies of history, and show a correct appreciation of the current course of events, will not be taken amiss.

II.

In physical science, whenever the movements, combinations or forces of matter present the same uniform phenomena, those uniform conditions are termed, laws; they are the conditions of its existence, the courses appointed by the great Creator, in which it obediently runs. The recollection of these laws is of primary importance to investigations in natural philosophy.

In political science, it is equally useful to remember what unvarying phenomena attend the progress of human events, and are the characteristics of men associated as nations. It is from history—taking the term in its broadest sense—we ascertain what these are. Though incapable of definition, with the precision of physical laws, and constantly changing with the advancing intelligence of men, yet, from them certain axiomatic truths are derivable, which can be accepted as guides by the student of political economy. As applicable to the present subject, I think the following propositions will be considered as unquestionable truths:

That a successful nationality must be composed of homogeneous

materials—of men of the same ethnological* type, inhabiting a country the physical conditions of which, as to soil and climate, do not greatly vary.

That the sentiment known as patriotism, love of country or loyalty—which is the cement of nationality—exists in nations in the inverse ratio to their geographical extent, and cosmopolitan character of their people, being the strongest in countries limited in size, and inhabited by men greatly resembling each other, and differing from the people of other nations.

That the average intellectual cultivation of a people determines the form of Government best suited to them; the higher the standard, the more popular may be the Government. As their average intelligence descends in grade, concentration of power in fewer hands, is necessary for the national progress and well-being.†

That national distinctions between men who spring from the same general race, are wholly educational. These differences, which, when brought into active force, create national animosities and wars, arise entirely from differing modes of training, association of ideas, habits of thought and habits of action, which in fact comprise education; and which again are, to a great extent, molded upon the physical conditions of the countries which nations respectively occupy.

That MASS and CLASS governments are natural antagonisms. Democracy (*demos*, the people, *kratein*, to govern—the government of the masses) and Aristocracy (*aristos*, the bravest or noblest—*aristokratia*, the rule of the chief people) represent practically, irreconcilable principles in the administration of national affairs; which antagonisms have always been the most demonstrative in republics.

That into a Democracy a race of men inferior to the masses, cannot be admitted without a violation of its first principles. As the Government rests in the whole people, so the whole must be eligible to govern. No class (in numbers) may be introduced which, from the natural incapacity of its members, or from ethnological antipathies, is unfitted to

* I use *ethno* as meaning the varieties of the human race, and the word *race*, where it occurs, as meaning an admitted and acknowledged type of variety.

† By *average intelligence*, I mean the knowledge spread throughout the masses of the people—that aggregate of knowledge which swells to a great amount from the numbers of people who know, rather than the elevation of knowledge which is enjoyed by a few. A community composed of Lord Brougham, Edward Everett, Charles Anthon, and ten thousand Hottentots, would be one in which the average intelligence would be exceedingly low, although within it almost all human knowledge might be comprised. Whereas, ten thousand New England mechanics, educated in the public schools, would present a community of a very high average, though perhaps not one of them might possess more than a rudimentary knowledge of modern science.

rule, or whose rule would be revolting to the prejudices of the body of the people.

That the extreme types of men will not amalgamate, or, if forced so to do, the tendency of the offspring (which is to degenerate and become extinct) proves that a natural law has been violated.

I think that these propositions are self-evident.

III.

The inauguration of the American Commonwealth was aptly termed "the great experiment." With the single exception of a few Swiss cantons, the world had not seen a DEMOCRATIC republic, until the New England States had achieved their independence, and abolished slavery. There had not previously existed an example of a nation, in which the governing power rested in, and emanated from, the whole people equally, by admitted constitutional right. There has scarcely been an historical period without its republic, from the Israelites under their Judges, from the classic clusters which crowded ancient Greece and rendered illustrious that age and people, from Republican Rome, through Venice, Genoa, Switzerland, Holland and the American Union, down to the burlesque nationalities of Central America; but nowhere can the student of history, up to this day, place his finger upon a simple democratic republic, until the Northern Commonwealths of the United States were formed, except the Swiss cantons just alluded to; and, even now, many of those cantons are so strongly tempered with the ancient aristocratic element, as to be more in form than in spirit, pure democracies.

What, then, are the Southern Republics of America? Are they not democratic? History does not disclose any communities less so. In whatever country are found two classes of men—the one superior in power and privileges, the other without political power and unprivileged, but nevertheless forming a large proportion of the mass of the population—there is presented the phenomenon of an aristocratic and plebeian class, in the plainest acceptation of the terms. It is immaterial how these different classes originated; whether the dominant class became so from ancient use, and hereditary, slowly growing and continually conceded encroachments; or by force of arms and conquest; or by superior intelligence, subjecting the masses physically, through partial laws, or spiritually, by impressing and enthraling their imagination; or from positively superior natures operating upon natures more feebly constituted. The result is the same, and develops the fact of an aristocratic and exclusive class, distinguished from, and holding in subjugation the commonality or the plebeian class.

Neither the color nor race of the superior, nor of the inferior class, nor the disparity between the two in their respective communities—the comparative elevation of the one, or the degradation of the other—affect this general definition. The lower, may possess a natural and political capacity for acquiring wealth and influence, and thus rising into and forming a part of the governing class, as in most of the monarchies of modern Europe; they may be held as serfs of the monarch or of the soil, as in Russia, or in an impassable religious conventional degradation, as in India; or they may exist, as in ancient Rome at the close of her republican era, in a bondage merely physical, but without any ban, social or religious, inevitably forbidding their rise; or in a slavery combining social inferiority as impassable as that of the sudra of Hindostan, with a physical bondage as complete as that of the Roman slave, as in the case of the colored population of the Southern States of America—the differences are unimportant to the definition now stated. The subordinate order held in subjection; the dominant order, their superiors, exempt from, and yet subsisting upon, their labors directly or indirectly, make the fact. Those, are the aristocratic or patrician grade; these, the democratic or plebeian, *within their respective communities*. It is the existence of a privileged and dominant class in any country, whether civilized or barbarian, in the presence of a numerically large but inferior class, which is destitute of political power and personal equality, which constitutes an aristocracy.

The peculiar characteristics of an aristocratic class are essentially the same in all countries, and have existed, with but little change, in every historical age. In fact, they are the natural habitudes of our common humanity thus placed, and cannot be otherwise. These characteristics are subject to modification from external influences—by religious teaching, by extending knowledge, by the spreading glory of that universal light known as civilization. These temper the effect and assuage the harshness, but leave the essence of patrician attributes unchanged. In all aristocracies we find in its members the claim, as of right, to dominance and power; the assumption of superiority; a demand for exemption from physical labor; an idea that labor is a badge of servility and, therefore, of dishonor; a desire for wealth as a necessity of superiority, coupled with a repugnance to obey the universal law under which wealth is created—by labor; a high sense of personal importance, and an intense solicitude that it should be acknowledged; an instant perception of personal insult, and a determined spirit of vengeance; a contempt for life, not of other men alone

but of their own, upon any conditions except those which maintain their superiority and compel its recognition. (Hence the institution of "chivalry," and its spawn, the duello.) When they are compelled to gain a subsistence, they naturally turn to those avocations which common consent considers not derogatory to the chief people—such as places of honor and trust under the Government, occupations connected with the proprietorship of land, or employments possessing judicial or guiding functions, as those of judges, divines, lawyers or physicians. This instinct is developed in all aristocracies, whether in civilized or savage communities. Around these material characteristics are hung the graceful courtesies, and generally the polite accomplishments of their time and country; a gallant bearing to equals; munificence to rising inferiors; a splendid hospitality to the stranger and the guest; and a strange deafness and blindness, to the rights of the masses of men below them. To this class doubtless belong virtues and vices, which they share in common with the classes below them. I merely enumerate the peculiarities of the order, necessarily growing up with its members from their position, and resulting from their education.

A democracy, on the other hand, is an association of *all* the people, upon a common level of rights and privileges. If there be a specially endowed, a specially exempt, or an exclusively governing class, there is no democracy. The first object of a democratic aggregation is to dispense with class government, and to retain in the hands of the whole people its entire sovereignty. Its direct consequence is to distinguish with honor, the station and occupation of its greatest numbers—the workers and their work; which is the extreme opposite of the intent and effect of an aristocracy. The masses of men labor everywhere. The sovereign power must be dignified, and those in whom it resides share its dignity. The laborer and his labor are inseparable; therefore must labor be ennobled. One of the missions of modern democracy, is, to emblazon upon the front of its nationality, that labor is honorable in itself as well as the source of power—as that nationality swells in grandeur, to compel the deference of mankind to these novel tenets, and teach the world to recognize the doctrine scorned in aristocratic communities, that physical exertion lays at the foundation of empire; that laborers who rear its fabric may of right occupy its high places; that they are at once their own commonalty, and aristocracy—peers of their realm, and of each other—subjects to their Constitution, but sovereigns in themselves.

There are three test points of a true democracy:—equality of political station amongst the people, (if not present, yet attainable, as in the case

of the young, or aliens, by time, or by compliance with regulative conditions) ; the elevation of physical labor to an equal power with intellectual labor; and the privilege of free utterance upon all political, moral, and social matters. So unerringly do these characteristics indicate a simple democracy, that it is not too much to say, they cannot exist except in one; nor is any community democratic, to which they will not affirmatively apply.

None of these characteristics applies to the southern republics of the United States. In them, there cannot be equality of political station amongst the people; labor is not held in honor, but in contempt; and free utterance would be madness. No test of simple democracy finds a response within them. They are complete aristocracies, and find prototype and parallel, more or less, in every aristocratic republic which has yet existed. Between ancient Attica, as daguerretyped in history, and South Carolina, for instance, there is a singular similarity. In both, the governing classes form but a small proportion of the whole population; in both are those classes polished, eloquent, petulant, more magnificent in conception than in execution,* and fond of change; in both are found an inferior free class, and a slave class of immensely preponderating numbers. In both is there the same impatience of disagreeable truth. For impolitic truth-telling, the Athenians ostracised the Areopagite Aristides; and South Carolina bludgeoned Senator Sumner. In both, the barbarous acts were exulted in at the time, and regretted afterwards. The Athenian Republic was beyond doubt purely aristocratic, and may be accepted as the prototype of all republics down to 1776, with, as already explained, the Swiss exception.

Let any thoughtful man apply a democratic test to South Carolina—that, for instance, of freedom of speech. In simple democracies, where there is nothing to be hid, men are educated to speak the thoughts of their hearts—to reason aloud. Where this is permitted, freedom is guaranteed; for wrongs, however existing, find voices which human nature, perpetually appealed to, cannot resist. Such is the freedom of the Northern States, but such cannot be the freedom of the South. So long as millions of strong men are held, docile in a bondage with which

* Exceedingly characteristic is the following from the Charleston Mercury, the morning after the Star of the West had been fired into—the first blow in the contest. Were the occasion adequate, the language would be Demosthenic—“We would not exchange or recall that blow for millions! It has wiped out a half century of scorn and outrage. Again South Carolina may be proud of her historic fame and ancestry, without a blush upon her cheek for her own present honor. The haughty echo of her cannon has ere this reverberated from Maine to Texas, through every hamlet of the North and down along the great waters of the Southwest.”

their ignorance of any other condition makes them content, free discussion upon almost any political subject would be dangerous. Like illuminating a powder magazine with open torches, it would almost invite an explosion, which friend and foe must equally deprecate. [It is surely evident that the Creator did not intend man, even of the lowest type, to be made a chattel, or he would not have endowed him with the capacity to understand the language of other men, and to reason upon what he hears. Before one's horse, or dog, or steam-engine, one is under no restraint; but he that owns a reasoning slave, must surrender a portion of his own liberty to secure the servitude of his chattel—his liberty of speech.] Happy are the people whose social superstructure is incombustible—who may carry the bright and even fiery light of free discussion, from its foundation to its dome!

But were the South to abolish slavery to-morrow, were the negroes to be free—nay, to go a step further, suppose they were all to be educated—could the Southern Republics be democracies, with such an immense proportion of a different and inferior type of men among them? I think not. Ethnological repulsions, the unconquerable antipathy of race, would prevent the negro's admittance to equality with the white man, in political power and privilege. It seems impossible, in the nature of things, that "the Ethiop can so change his skin" as to be eligible to govern the State. Until the negro race becomes an inconsiderable fragment of the whole population, (so as to become merely an exception to the rule) in any Southern State, *its republicanism must be aristocratic.*

Europeans regard these antipathies as prejudices merely, and possibly they are right; but in national affairs what are prejudices? They are substantialities, often of the most indestructible character. They are absolute tangibilities, as much so as the laws, the religion or the language of a people. More tenacious than these, they are often found lingering amongst men, whose very nationality has been obliterated by conquest, whose religion has changed, whose language has been lost—but whose prejudices defy extinction and flourish in fragments with the historical memories of their fallen country. That the prejudices of the white man, are set against the equality of the negro, is, *in the white man's country*, a sufficient reason for placing him in an inferior political condition.

IV.

There has been a constant contention in all ages between the aristocratic and the democratic elements of society—the former seeking to maintain their power, the latter to abridge it, and sink its possessors to

a common level. This contention has always been the most vigorous in republics. Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, were the battle-fields of this struggle, during a great part of their existence. In Rome, the patrician overrode the plebeian, and when the commoners gained the ascendancy carried the republic into imperialism. "They would never submit!" In Florence, Genoa and Venice, democracy only reared its head to be strangled. In France, the contest culminated in national madness, and had to be restrained by despotism. In England, since the time of the Cavaliers and Roundheads, the democratic current, like a full though quiet stream, has been gradually washing away the aristocratic embankments, reared by the higher classes.

There is nothing more marked in history, than the conflict of these elements. We may ask, *why on this continent, and in this age, the antagonism should cease?* Why the Northern republics—the most ultra of democracies; should harmonize with the Southern republics—the most intense of aristocracies? It is a striking proof of the wisdom of the founders of the American confederation, that the discordant elements have combined for three-quarters of a century. It is true that they only come into actual contact at the federal center, where it may be supposed that the wisest and coolest men of both sections meet. But this contact, slight as it is, and carefully guarded, is enough to produce continual effervescence, and convert the common Senate chambers of the Union, into mere arenas for the strife of incompatible principles. The southerner comes to Washington, full of the *hauteur* and idea of domination, which have been educated in him, by the contact of slavery, and which he feels ought to be recognized. He meets the Northerner, who has been taught to deny superiority to any man, unless for actual personal achievement and self-built eminence—to whom the natural pretensions of the South are akin to insolence—who refuses to concede honor, to the wearers of knightly spurs, except they have *won* them, and who look upon their purchase, or inheritance, almost with contempt. It is impossible for men thus differing, to unite usefully in a common object, when that object continually evokes their antagonistic peculiarities.

I cannot avoid the conclusion that this discordance is the cause of the threatened severance of the Union, and not the existence of slavery in the Southern States. Slavery is the remote, the educational, but not the immediate cause. Its abolition in the South, (unless accompanied by the removal of the inferior race, and the re-education of the

white population in the democratic principles of equality,) would not reconcile the contestants.

The dullest observer may see, that the dissimilarities of the extremes of North and South are yearly increasing. At the time of the union, they were less violent than at present. The education of the junior generations in the east is tending to augment the diversity. National distinctions while wholly educational, are cumulative up to a certain point. Take an example in France and England. The people are of one common type. They have had distinct and various interests, and a separate existence. Different modes of thought, habits of life, and habits of action, have from age to age impressed the people of each nation, until, like two branches from a common root, they have grown up in divergent directions, and in those directions have each become confirmed and massive trunks. The youth of each, educated separately, prolong the diversity from generation to generation. To bind those nations into a unity of political opinion and purpose, involves the long process of uneducating and re-educating the people. Although they may unite occasionally as nations, in cases where they have a common purpose to accomplish, yet the condition of their friendship is to keep (nationally) as separate, as possible.

Between Massachusetts and South Carolina, taking them as types of the different nationalities of North and South, there is a striking dissimilarity. There is more affinity, more points of mutual attraction, between New Englanders and the middle classes of Great Britain, than between the former and the Carolinians. In fact, except as to certain notions as to the form of government, the first two are the same. Not only in race, language, and religion, have they a common identity, but in both is there the same love of freedom and of absolutely free expression; the same indomitable and active personal industry, and love of useful enterprise; the same instinct of thrift, and acquisitiveness; the same spirit of enquiry, and investigation. They cherish the same home comforts, and revere the same domestic virtues; they mutually dislike the gorgeous, but inutile spirit of chivalry; under a plodding exterior life, both carry a dormant enthusiasm, which, when evoked, renders them capable of sublime self-abnegation. Docile in peace, invincible in war, their masses are the happiest examples, and their leaders the foremost apostles, of human progress. Yet notwithstanding this almost perfect homogeneousness, the seventy-five years of separate national education which have intervened, would render a union of these peoples now unnatural and unsuccessful. Distinct nationalities *must be* the condition of their friendship.

As illustrative of the correctness of the opinion, that the differences between North and South do not immediately spring from the existence of slavery, the citizens of California have had a practical example. There have been here men from the North and the South, but no slavery. The Northerners, following their educational instincts, commenced to work out their fortunes by developing the resources of the country—exploring, building, trading, mining, farming, and pursuing the mechanic arts. The Southerners, taking their natural bent, sought the same end in governing, advising and directing the rest. They have been our legislators, statesmen, lawyers and government officials,—but scarcely in any case, mechanics, traders, miners or farmers. Between the two classes, there have been continual, though not demonstrative, antipathies. In the political field, our cavaliers met their Roundhead, in the person of the Cromwell of California—D. C. Broderick—whose energetic labors to overthrow their power, are well remembered. He lost his life, it is true, by submitting in a moment of weakness to a cavalier ordeal—that of skill with the pistol—but, like his prototype, for the time being he accomplished his purpose. To a bystander, the essential, undisguised differences between the men of the North and the South, have been as patent as the distinctions between English and French. The Southerner in California, when not in a political majority—when not of the ruling power—floats as a sort of uncombined element in the social mass; his heart is with his native State, his feelings follow the bent of his early training, and he takes pride in exhibiting his distinctions in the face of the majority by which he is overborne. “He will never submit!”—it is not natural to him. We have had the principles of the American struggle epitomized and dramatized, in California, and yet there has been no slavery.

The fact, that the pretext for the severance of North and South lies in a dispute as to the destinies of the common property—the Territories—does not alter, the idea now expressed. The North conceives that slavery is incompatible with democratic institutions, and that on the same soil, they cannot successfully coëxist. The people of the North design to make these Territories, the homes of white working men. The existence of slavery in the presence of free laboring men, is an insult to their daily life, as it degrades physical toil, by making it the special avocation of slaves, and creates in the mind and habits of the slaveholder, as an inevitable consequence, a sense and display of superiority over those who labor; which is felt by free working men educated in democracies, to be intolerable. If the Territories were

tropical swamps, unfit for white men to work in, the North probably would care nothing for their destiny. But the admission of the aristocracy-fostering institution, into a country fitted by nature to be a home for democracy, is equivalent to surrendering it entirely. The old antagonism of democracy forbids such a concession to the aristocratic section, even where, as in this case, the latter are entitled, in justice, to at least a share of the common estate. Sometimes democracies "will never submit."

The quarrel of the American crisis has been happily and tersely epigrammized by Senator Benjamin of Louisiana, in his celebrated exclamation—"The South will never submit!" The Presidential contest of 1856 gave warning of the growing power of the North. In the election of Lincoln in 1860, it was discovered that the power had grown in full strength. History taught the South, that the nature of that power was, to continue growing. For more than half a century the aristocratic element of the South, always cohesive around the center of its specialty, and politically adroit by long training, had ruled the Union. The North, though huge in numbers, trained in democratic principles, submitted, as it had been taught, to the will of the majority throughout those years. But the first time the aristocracies of the South are outvoted, and find themselves powerless, they will withdraw. "The South will never submit!" Aristocracy never did willingly. It must rule, or retire. Of what use to it are masses of men, if they cannot be controlled?

V.

It is everywhere admitted that the same kind of government which serves the purposes of the Northern republic, will not do for the South. For the North, the means of conducting foreign relations, of suppressing crime, and adjusting disputes between its citizens by law, is all the government that is needed. If the people so lack intelligence as to require more ruling than this, they are unripe for democratic institutions. The Southern republics have had a legacy bequeathed to them in slavery, which has created governmental necessities entirely different, and of infinite difficulty. There, a host of a strange race has to be kept in bondage, and made profitable. A popular government is impossible; a class rule, imperative. The larger the slave population becomes, the more infallibly will the government be concentrated—the stronger, and more despotic is it required. An aristocracy has an element of strength which democracy does not possess—except, perhaps,

during the continuance of a foreign war. It stands continually armed, as in the presence of a common enemy. It has a common purpose to accomplish, which is to keep the inferior class under its feet. From this cause, aristocratic governments have always exhibited that distinct and direct self-energy, which springs from unity of purpose. If the Southern republics are to retain slavery, and continue to prosper, the circle of the governing classes, instead of expanding, will contract. Athens, under her Archons, furnishes a splendid example of an aristocratic republic, maintaining itself for many centuries, keeping the while in subjection a slave population, variously estimated at from five to twenty times the number of the privileged classes, and, notwithstanding the excitable and unstable character of her people, progressing to a wonderful pitch of power and prosperity. Its government was a concentrated oligarchy.

The Southern republics of America, are much more dangerously placed than were the republics of Greece, and need governments at least equally despotic. They are surrounded by lively, talkative, somewhat intermeddling democracies as neighbors, whose great hobby is freedom—freedom of speech, of action, of person, and of electoral choice—freedom to go everywhere, see everything, and do everything; who are blessed with a fatal intuition for finding out weak spots, hitting sore places, and treading on carefully covered corns, and whose passion is to alter everything, in search of improvement.

One can easily imagine how a haughty people, holding an immense servile population in bondage, by a tenure which the present humor of civilization repudiates, should live in continual terror of these unceremonious freemen, and should desire to get away from them as far and as fast as possible.

Unquestionably, the people of the South know what is best for themselves. How can *Northern* men judge for them? *Their* dwellings are not built upon the volcanic foundation, of millions of men held in unwilling servitude. *Their* goods and chattels cannot reason, or take murderous impulses. *They* are not haunted by the skeletons, which hang in the closets of the South—*they* do not hear that shaking of gaunt bones, telling fearfully of danger, which carries dismay to the Southern heart. *They* have not had a giant nursed for them, and bequeathed to them, which they *must* control or permit it to strangle them. If the Southerner, replete as he is with intelligence, decides upon a political course for himself, the Northerner may accept it as *proven*, that that course, is the wisest and best for him. It is asking too much of human

nature—especially of aristocratic human nature—to require it to forego what it deems most to its own advantage, out of consideration for the good of the democratic masses, by which it has been outvoted.

VI.

What is Secession, so-termed? *It is the act of a nation changing its form of government.* In separating from the American Union, the people of South Carolina adopt a new form of government, and elect new rulers to administer their national affairs. They refuse to be ruled by the North, through the federal power; they exercise their right and privilege of rejecting a form under which they will not live, and choosing a system which they prefer.

The right of nations to choose, or change, their own form of government, and their own rulers, has become a fundamental—nay, more, *the* fundamental law of civilized nationalities. In ancient history, we find a reiteration of this right, running for centuries amongst the freest and most enlightened nations, whose records have been preserved. It does not seem to have been disputed. Rome, for instance, commenced as a rude monarchy. Its government in seven hundred years changed its form to aristocratic republicanism, concentrated that again under Dictators, Decemviri and Consuls. Sometimes the Tribunes of the People ruled; sometimes, Aristocratic triumvirates. Finally, she returned to imperialism, under her four centuries of emperors. I cannot remember a single expression in the records of Latin history and literature, which even questions the right of the Roman people to make those changes. They are repeatedly deplored, but it did not seem to enter into the mind of the historians and writers of that period, to question the right of the people to make, or consent to them.

During the dreary centuries which succeeded the dismemberment of that power—in the “dark ages”—sundry preposterous herccies to common sense sprang into life; and, amongst them, the degma of the “divine right of kings” to rule independent of a people’s choice. This absurdity, which was nurtured into strength by the side of its twin dogma in ecclesiastical affairs—the “apostolic succession”—(as though piety were hereditary, and the sublimities of Christianity could only be perpetuated by human rotation in office, as if the standard-bearers of the Cross should necessarily be the most successful intriguers of an intriguing priesthood)—smothered for centuries, and smothers in some countries to this day, the fundamental law, which ordains that a nation shall of right choose its own rulers. This law, which had fallen into

desuetude, was reasserted by the League of the Grisons in the fourteenth century, and reinstated as a European element on the field of Sempach, upon the dead body of Leopold of Austria. The glorious republic of Switzerland has nursed it into modern strength.

Holland, in 1575, asserted this right under William the Silent, and after a long struggle shook off the yoke of Spain, and the fetters of the Inquisition. For two centuries the sturdy Dutchmen maintained the principle—sometimes with Stadtholders, sometimes without; at one time, under a Grand Pensionary; and latterly under a monarchy. England asserted it, in 1653, under Cromwell, and, in 1688, under William of Orange. Poland perished in a similar endeavor. Sweden asserted it, in 1521, under Gustavus Vasa; and, in 1810, in the choice of Bernadotte. The United States established it on this continent, in 1776. France followed, in 1790, and continually since. Chile adopted it, in 1819; Mexico, in 1821, under Iturbide; Peru, in 1823; Belgium (a forcible example, and notable precedent in the present crisis,) in 1830; and the list (of which these are only the chief instances) closes with the recent action of the Duchies of Northern Italy, and Naples, in the Garibaldian war.

In these instances, (with the exception of Poland, whose fate is the commiseration of free men the world over,) this great right was not only asserted, but was in every case admitted, sooner or later, by contemporaneous powers. Louis Napoleon, “by the grace of God and the will of the French people, Emperor, &c,” is its modern champion; and its last exponent is the Cabinet of Great Britain. The ink is scarcely dry in Lord John Russell’s celebrated despatch to the British Minister at Turin, in which this fundamental law is distinctly recognized and applied. It has become, and is, the fundamental law of civilized nationalities.

Is it reserved for America—for her Northern commonwealths, whose adherence to this doctrine, has been sealed by the blood of their founders, for the freest of all democracies, the very breath of whose nostrils is the right of choice—to deny and abrogate this great political law, when its exercise is attempted by their brethren of the Southern republics? By many, the *right* of Secession is denied; its attempt is denounced as treason, to be punished and resisted by force—by fratricidal war. It is asserted that the Southern republics shall not do, in 1861, as the Northern commonwealths themselves did, in 1776; and as the most enlightened of modern nations have done, for the last five centuries. Shall this noble RIGHT which has been nursed by patriots of all

lands, and handed down from sire to son as the foremost legacy of freedom, the adoption and recognition of which is the brightest trait of modern civilization—shall this right, here, in the home and heritage of freemen, be struck down and annihilated, by men whose fathers died in planting it, and who have hitherto protected and cherished it?

Are South Carolina, or Georgia, or Louisiana, nations or not? If they are, are Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania despots, that they should act towards them as Austria would to Venetia, or Hungary, or Russia to Poland, and compel them, at the point of the bayonet, to forego their *right* of choice—force them to retain a form of government, which they refuse to live under? It weakens the argument to add, that the same right of choice which was exercised by the Southern republics in voluntarily joining the Union, may logically be reëxercised in withdrawing from it. IT IS ENOUGH THAT A NATION'S CHOICE IS NATIONALLY EXPRESSED FOR OTHER NATIONS TO ACQUIESCE.

It is trifling, to assert as analogical, that if South Carolina may withdraw from the Union, a county may segregate itself from a State, or a town declare its independence of a county. In the one case, it is a sovereignty which chooses—a national entirety, the right of which to choose, is an international axiom; in the other, it would be a mere fragment of a nation, splitting itself from the main trunk.

It will be said that although the right of nations to choose their own form of government, is admitted by all civilized people, (except those governed by despotisms) yet the recognition of this right is withheld, until the party choosing, has made good his selection by force. I admit that this is the European addendum to the law. It is tantamount to giving a privilege only, to those who are strong enough to take it without permission. It is conceding justice to those only, who have the most guns, and can take the best aim—who can convince their opponents, not by reason, but by slaughter. Such an illogical condition has clung to the skirts of this national right, since it emerged from the ignorance of the mediæval era. It is a part of the filth of that degraded period, which has not been brushed off by modern intelligence—a remnant, a specimen, of the boasted brute chivalry which instituted the wager of battle, and the ordeal of torture, as tests of truth and innocence. Why, in the name of common sense, *must* the choice of freedom be baptised in blood? Why *must* its exercise be the signal of civil war; a cause for desolated homes, for human passions inflamed with hatred, to thirst for murder? These horrors are not the less ter-

rible because they are done in the name of patriotism by both combatants; because both simultaneously burn with fury and love of country; because each glories in the other's destruction, and in the exaltation of their common land. The processes of the Inquisition were not the less dismal to the sufferers, because they were conducted for the salvation of their souls; the motives which prompted the inquisitors then, do not now, hallow their acts or justify their cruelties. The time has gone forever when men may be torn to pieces because of their religious choice; and it is time that a political choice, should cease to be the cause of letting loose on peaceful communities the havoc of domestic warfare.

It is true that there are examples of nations, which appear to think, that civil war is necessary to give dignity to every difference of political party opinion. In Mexico, a little war, some wholesale robberies, and a limited license to soldiery, lust and love of rapine, appear to be *a la mode* at each change of national officers. Unless the commercial and industrious classes, are mulcted somewhat of their earnings; unless a few hundred haciendas are harried and burnt; a thousand or so of fathers, husbands, or brothers, left to gnash their teeth over daughters, wives, or sisters, brutally violated; unless the domestic economy of the peaceful classes is reasonably outraged, and at least a respectable number of good citizens, are hanged or cut down on suspicion of disaffection to the dominant power — unless such things happen, the ambitious and pretentious misers, who might eventually become President and Cabinet of that extensive confederacy, would feel deprived of a portion of their inaugural ceremonies. Nicaragua, Costa Rica, New Granada, Chile and Peru, all follow the chivalric notion that bloodshed is necessary to an effective political choice; and acting accordingly, they indulge in a constant succession of small wars, burnings, confiscations, reprisals, executions, common soldiery outrages, and gasconading pronunciamientos.

If I could conceive it possible that the Northern democracies of America would emulate the example of those semi-barbarous republics in this crisis, I should lose faith in humanity and feel as if long-cherished and honored friends, had suddenly become vicious imbeciles.

VII.

Union is not always strength. Detonating powder united with cement, will not add to the cohesive strength of a wall. Heterogeneous materials rear a weak fabric—built with such components, the higher

it rises, the weaker it becomes. It is thus with nations—especially with republics, and most especially with democracies. The last entirely lack the “personal interest bond;” that active principle akin to selfishness, which in monarchies and oligarchies converts the proprietary pretensions of the royal family, or of the aristocracy, into rivets of the commonwealth.

It is obvious that the wider a democracy spreads, the more it multiplies elements of internal discord within itself; and the freer it is, the more that discord finds expression. A wide empire requires very few sovereigns; a central despotism is a necessity of its existence. It is about the same distance from Maine to Texas that it is from the Baltic to Gibraltar. Nearly the same number of people inhabit the former tract of country now, as in the fourteenth century populated the latter. If in that century the League of the Grisons, from which sprang the Swiss republic, had established a number of democracies over that extent of Europe; had bound Germany, Italy, Holland, Burgundy, France, Spain and Portugal into one vast confederation—could it have existed to this day? Is it supposable that so infinite a diversity of interests—which, if not existent, would surely have grown with time—could have been bound in one immense union of disunity? But Switzerland alone, has lived through the intervening centuries, and kept her proud position amongst nations, her democratic freedom and her internal happiness. Her people are like each other; they have comparatively few conflicts of interest, and their country is limited in extent. Even with these advantages, she has had several narrow escapes from revolution, arising out of dissensions between her Cantons.

If it be fated that the American Union dissolve into two confederacies, it is consolatory to think, that each will be sufficiently strong to protect itself from external enemies; internal peace in each may be the more confidently looked for, because the antagonistic elements at present compelled to meet, will no longer be brought into conflict. The evil of actual severance is, in a great measure, ideal. That which is to be dreaded is, THE HATRED which the conflict commonly attending national ruptures engenders. No man is at this day bold enough to say, that the severance of the American colonies and the mother country was an evil, except for the insane warfare which it caused. Both countries have been, for seventy years, benefitted by that disunion; but the blood of kindred, inflamed by the conflict, has scarcely yet been cooled into mutual forgiveness.

To whom would disunion bring injury? Each section stoutly denies

that it will, or can, be injured; but, in some unexplained way, it is asserted that the whole are to be damaged, without a hair of either being hurt. Oh, it is urged, disunion will lower America in the eyes of Europe! Does America care—is either North or South, dependent on European opinion? Say, rather, that the PEACEFUL separation of thirty millions of people—sections of whom have diverse interests—into two confederacies, without bloodshed or violence, would be a spectacle of such surpassing grandeur—so contrary to all that men have heretofore witnessed—that Europe would be compelled to revere those principles, which, permeating the masses, can hold in check the passions of multitudes, and permit the sway of reason in a vast population. Great families break up in the order of Providence. England—though in relation to her colonial dependencies, a government concentrated almost to despotism—must, in time, cease to be the head of a world-wide empire. She expects to take her place as a mother of nations, and let her children work out their own destinies. Australia, Canada, British Columbia, the Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon, India, all will, in future generations, doubtless be independent nationalities, as her American colonies have become.

The great precedent which is wanted in the history of the world, is a peaceful division of a powerful empire. The United States have astonished the world by their progress; if they now divide, let them bless it, by establishing this noblest of national examples. To this end, thoughtful men hope, that everything like huckstering and driving bargains, will be avoided in the division of the national domain. A few forts, a stretch of unpeopled territory, a few millions more or less of the national debt, are bubbles when compared with the peace of thirty millions of people. A three months' derangement of commerce would quadruple in loss, the entire value of such matters of dispute.

To avoid the perpetual raking up of the old irritation, it is to be hoped that the North will lay down the doctrine of England, as to escaping slaves. Let there be no extradition laws for fugitives from labor. The Southerner will then look upon fugitives as dead, and submit to their loss as he does when he buries them.

VIII.

It is vain to speculate upon the ultimate destiny of the Slave States. Were the race held in bondage of the same human type, we could anticipate an ultimate blending, and an elevation of the whole. But here are millions of black men amongst millions of white; and of the two, the lower are the more vigorous and re-productive. History furnishes no precedent of races so intimately

mixed, yet so widely differing. The very antipodes of humanity occupy a common soil; between them fusion appears impossible. Equally impossible does it seem that, in this reading, printing and thinking age, the inferior race can for a great length of time be held in bondage. The growing lights and potential voices of civilization, will edge by degrees into the midst of the colored race. Even if they could be kept in bondage by force, the time will surely come to the dominant order in the South, as it has come to their brethren of England and the North, when from their own consciences will spring the power which will manumit the slave.

But, then, what shall be? Can the two races exist together, distinct as the squares of a chess board, and harmonize? It is hardly conceivable. More probable is it, that the black race, obeying their natural instincts, will gradually leave the temperate zone, and by degrees crowd down upon the tropics. Already the amalgamation of the Caucasian and Indian races in Mexico, Central America, and tropical South America, is working the extinction of both, and making room for a fresh human tide. It scarcely requires the eye of prophecy to see in the far future the millions of the American negro, spreading through those countries, until they found nationalities of their own, amidst the swamps and heats of the tropical zone. Thus, the law of races, violated when the sons of Africa were brought to the white man's home, to countries fitted for the white man's occupancy, shall, after the lapse of centuries, assert its force; and the order of nature, interrupted by the rapacity of man, be restored and maintained.

Through what national throes and human suffering, this, or what other end, shall be brought about, we know not. Our concern is with the present, and "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

IX.

Whatever may be the result of the present crisis, the State of California will undoubtedly remain with the Union. The advocates of Secession—of an independent Republic, of a Pacific Utopia—are confined to people from the South and their immediate friends. Citizens from Missouri, Kentucky and Tennessee, and numbers from Louisiana, in the main prefer the Union; but the entire mass of our Northern and Western citizens, without distinction of political party, with a unanimity which delights the lovers of peace, and progress, and democratic government, adhere with their whole hearts to the Union—to the whole Union if possible, but to the Union with the free States under every prospective contingency. There may indeed come a time in the remote future, when the happy physical conditions of our State shall have produced fixity and density of population, when the labors of many generations shall have added greatly to the national resources, that California may gracefully cease to lean upon her sister States and become self-existing; but for the present, she is emphatically of the North, for freedom, democracy and Union.*

* The division of the American Union, if it take place, will be at the great line which divides North and South. There will be a Union of Democratic Republics—without any

Let us hope that while the South works out the arduous problem of maintaining slavery surrounded by the blaze of freedom, and the North develops the progress of the "great experiment" of government by the masses, California may realize the prediction of one of the most original thinkers of Europe, made twenty years ago, while she was yet a miserable province of Mexico: "*It may not be unreasonable to expect, when the United States are fully peopled to the Pacific, the greatest civilization of that vast Territory will be found in the Peninsula of California, and the narrow strip of country beyond the Rocky Mountains.*"†

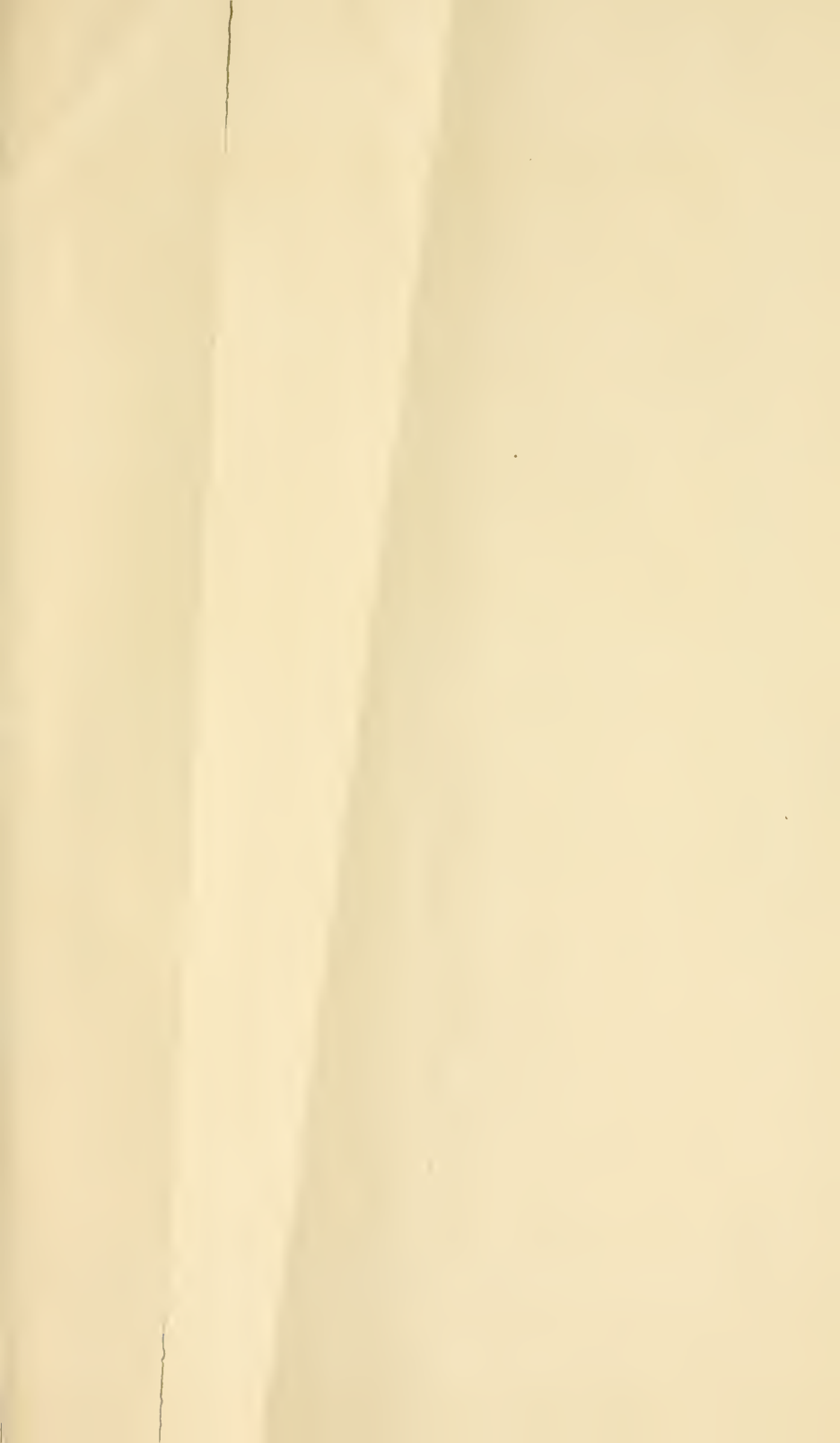
I am, dear sir, yours truly,

ANGLO-CALIFORNIAN.

SAN FRANCISCO, February 4, 1861.

great principles of incompatibility to evoke continual jars within it; and there will be a Union of Aristocratic Republics equally homogeneous within its circle. Of course, each may expect to have disturbances arising from clashing geographical or sectional interests, but they will, within their respective Unions, be free from the violent and eternal antagonisms of Aristocracy and Democracy, of priviledgism and equality, of freedom and slavery. Western Virginia, Kentucky, Eastern Tennessee and Maryland will (judging from my observation of them) be perplexed to choose. They will probably unite in the first instance with the Southern Union—but in the course of time renounce that connection and unite with the North.

† *Vestiges of Creation*. Page 227.





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